

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals upon Current Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

THEORIES AND FACTS ABOUT THE CHINESE.

From the N. Y. Times.

The meeting of workmen on Thursday night in reference to the importation of coolies will doubtless receive the attention it deserves. The preamble to the resolutions is not very temperate in its character, and some things were said at the meeting which we hope were not meant. The Mayor very properly observed that the whole subject was an extremely difficult one, and that it was useless to heap up objections in regard to it. Congress will undoubtedly have to deal with the problem, and in the meantime the opinions of the workmen will necessarily have great weight—more especially when they are divested of extravagance.

If, however, the "Chinese-American question" is to be discussed in an intelligent and useful manner, it is highly desirable to keep highly-colored exaggeration out of it. The Tribune on Thursday published a long statement designed to prove that it is the duty of Congress to regulate or prohibit the importation of Chinese coolies, "just as it first regulated and prohibited the importation of African slaves." In these few words the whole question is misrepresented and confused. The Chinese shoemakers now at North Adams are not slaves. The Tribune's own correspondence from the village proves that. The following passage appeared on Thursday, almost side by side with the statement about "slaves" in the article referred to:

"These cheerful faces, these eager learners, these faithful workers, these lavish purchasers of shirts and stockings, grade of goods, these who have their own work-seekers have no suggestion of slavery; this generous manufacturer, more bent on making the strangers feel comfortable and at home in strange land than in getting back his large investment, is not the man to undertake the business of a slave master, nor is the man who has a sphere or in the laws of Massachusetts to make it desirable on his part to make a bargain for enforcement here. The only slaves in North Adams are the men who are employed and sacrifice their independence to an arbitrary Union, governed far away; the manufacturer who has broken the hearts of the same emancipated men, and more humiliating still; and the freed men in the village are the immigrants who have come from across the China to a land which offers opportunities for all."

Congress may doubtless prohibit the introduction of slaves into this country, but has it any right to interpose unnecessary or vexatious obstacles to the importation of free labor? This question the Star disposes of by asserting that the coolies are slaves. But our contemporary does not seem to be in possession of any special information with regard to the terms of Sampson's contract, or else it has withheld that information from the public. "Immigrants are welcome," says the Star, "slaves are not." Exactly. But we cannot legislate against the Chinese as slaves until we have some positive proof before us that they are slaves.

The writer in the Tribune objects to the Chinese on account of their race. The arguments of the Tribune itself when such objections were made to the negroes are surely sufficient to meet this point. The Tribune has been preaching a good many years in vain if these "race" prejudices are now to prevail. But the writer is also afraid that the "Mongolians will gradually incorporate themselves with the blood and being of the country," and he goes on in a strain which will be rather startling to old readers of the Tribune to insinuate that there will be at once a wholesale admixture of races. There is a vast preponderance of the "female element" in Massachusetts, and "it is a suggestive fact that the first organized bodies of industrial Chinamen have been taken to Massachusetts." The writer "draws such deductions as they please." The deduction we should draw from it is that the argument is an insult to American women, who would have as much to say on the particular question involved as the "Mongolians." We think they may be trusted in the same village or State with the Chinese shoemakers.

The writer of this extraordinary article further objects to the Chinese on the ground that they sleep in bunks and not in beds, and eat queer food. It is a contest, he says, "of the bunk against the bed, the roast beef against the roast beef." This is plainly stated, and stated by prejudice. Now let us hear what the Tribune correspondent, a practical man, writing from North Adams, has to say on the subject:

"The Chinese are hearty eaters, requiring new supplies of rice and fresh meat for their kitchens in a way that somewhat encourages the small traders of North Adams, who had been led to suppose new shoemakers would have no demand for any merchandise but rats and piggy dogs. The cigar stores and whisky shops are better than they want will open new avenues of profitable trade."

So much for fact against fancy. The writer goes on to protest against the Chinese because they are immoral. Anybody would think from this that immorality was confined to the Chinese, whereas there is good reason to suppose that even the "Aphrodisiac" sometimes have "fond and mortifying vices." All such arguments, only serve to make the opposition to the introduction of Chinese laborers ridiculous. If the new tide of immigration is to be turned back, it must be for better reasons than those advanced in the Tribune. Is this, for instance, a good and valid reason for drawing a cord on the United States to keep out the Chinese? "When we shall have them arriving in these Northern States by the ten thousand and hundred thousand, we will undoubtedly find politicians playing for their votes." Does not the same thing happen with other naturalized citizens?

The whole subject ought to be properly inquired into, but in a fair, impartial, and business-like spirit. A mere collection of crochets and prejudices ought not to be accepted as the basis of a policy. The very facts about the motive for introducing Chinese into Massachusetts seem to have been misrepresented. We have been told that the object was to beat down the price of the white man's labor. But the sensible observer who writes from the spot declares that Mr. Sampson was forced by the despotism of his workmen to employ Chinese. Once more let us hear this correspondent, for he seems to know what he is talking about:

"The Massachusetts manufacturers do not deserve to be misrepresented on this important point. They have never been the advocates of the high wages which their mechanics were earning. Manufacturers have been forbidden to employ non-Crispin workmen; have been debarred from teaching apprentices of giving them tasks, such as stringing shoes, to orphans whom they wished to assist; have been prevented from themselves driving a pig into a shoe in their own shops; have had committees appointed to examine their books; have been prohibited from making any other than a certain grade of shoes; have been deprived of their liberty, and insulted in their manliness in a hundred ways. Indeed, the final blow which drove Mr. Sampson to seek refuge in San Francisco was the mandate of the Circuit Lodge that two dozen clever workmen (Crispines), whom he had procured from the central part of the State, should go home again and leave his Irish and

Canadian hands to turn out their clumsy workmanship undisturbed by the sight of anything better. He wanted these to obstruct Crispines as he left him that they were driving him to a step which would destroy their order; but they laughed in unbelief. What he sought was not men who would work cheaply, but men who would work well—men, in fact, who would work at all. If in obtaining them he has got men who will work and live happily on what would not keep a Crispin in tobacco, he at least is not to blame."

We are not prepared to say that it may not become necessary to place the importation of coolies under proper restrictions. But all such restrictions must be founded on justice and common sense, not upon mere prejudice. The problem is one which deserves, and must receive, attentive study. The workmen, to start with, had better consider whether they cannot modify their conduct toward their employers so as to reduce the temptation which now exists for the importation of Chinese laborers. Prices of labor cannot be kept up by the clumsy expedient of shutting competitors out of the market.

COMMISSIONER WELLS' RETIREMENT.

From the N. Y. World.

The office of Special Commissioner of Revenue has ceased to exist. It died for want of renewal. When this office was created, four years ago, we were not enthusiastic about its utility, supposing it to be but an additional appliance for aiding class legislation. It is due to the distinguished Commissioner who has retired to state that he so discharged his duties as to cause his office to be looked upon by all well-wishers to the public, who are not absolutely interested in iron, copper, woolsens, and other monopolies, as the rallying-point for truthful information; while his annual reports have become valuable state papers in our own country, and are looked upon in England, France, and Germany as among the most valuable contributions to political economy in our time.

It will be as interesting as it is instructive to give a succinct sketch of the rise and fall of this office.

The late Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. McCulloch, advised with the late Mr. Fessenden on the necessity of having some one in the Treasury Department whose sole business would be to point out to the Secretary, to Congress, and to the people the best mode of collecting taxes, the advisability of imposing new and repealing old taxes, to give truthful exhibits of the progress of commerce and industry, to collect statistics, both here and abroad, on these subjects, and give the whole result in annual reports. We were not wrong in supposing at the time that the people's enemies and oppressors—the monopolists—would seize upon this office as a power to work for their interest. Their design was only frustrated by the accident of the appointment of Mr. Wells, who, they supposed, would be thoroughly under their control. The first duty this all-powerful class imposed on him, in 1866, was to make a tariff to suit them. This task was as happy for the country as for Mr. Wells' future career. It opened his eyes to the selfishness and the shameless robberies of the monopolists. The tariff he drew up in 1867 was a tissue of oppression to the already oppressed people. It had but one redeeming point—it changed a good many articles in drugs from an *ad valorem* to a specific duty. This tariff bill, as is well known, passed the Senate, and added still more duties on the overloaded bill; but it failed in the House. From that time Mr. Wells began to be not the Special Commissioner of Revenue for Greeley, Carey, Morrill, Cameron, Kelley, McCarty, and men of that ilk, but he became the Special Commissioner of Revenue for the people.

In 1867-8 Mr. Wells in his report began to tell the truth. He had been during the summer in Europe, where he gathered statistics and facts which strangely jarred with the blessings of monopoly. The all-powerful and virtuous monopolists became alarmed. They felt in the position of Balak, who, having hired Balaam to curse his enemies, found that he actually blessed them. In vain did Mr. Wells explain to these enemies of progress that he was only giving the statistics which he proved all he had said. The answer was exactly the same that Balaam made to Balaam: "If you cannot crush the tendency to a revenue tariff, say nothing; if you cannot abuse free trade, you can at least not praise it. But Mr. Wells had the spirit of truth and fairness upon him, and he felt it his duty to enlighten Congress and the people. His reports of 1868-9 and 1869-70 are fresh in the people's minds. They have been read and re-read, particularly his last report. It is to Mr. Wells' credit that he should be abused by the iron monopolists, Kelley, Morrill, Dickey, etc., and by the salt monopolist, McCarty. This only shows that he worked for the people, and was not the hired man of monopoly. But they were determined to smother the formidable Wells, with his office. Rumors were circulated during the winter that Mr. Wells was to be got rid of by not renewing the office, which was to expire on the 1st of July. About four weeks ago Mr. Dawes, of Massachusetts, and Senator Trumbull, of Illinois, who were in Philadelphia, were prepared to move the continuation of the office in the House and Senate. But they would like to be sure, if the office were renewed, whether Mr. Wells would be reappointed. Mr. Wells was the President, and made this statement, at the same time assuring him that, by a close canvass, the renewal of the office would be voted two to one. President Grant frankly stated to Mr. Wells that the office should not be continued, and as the President did not wish to differ with the Secretary of the Treasury on such a subject, he advised Mr. Wells not to press the matter, or, indeed, think of it. This conversation determined Mr. Wells to advise his friends not to move in the matter.

But why does Mr. Boutwell wish to snuff out Mr. Wells? The answer is not difficult. This Secretary of the Treasury, the would-be converter of our bonds and aspirant for the Presidency, pales in ability before his capable subordinate, and is jealous of his great popularity.

ENGLISH NEGLECT OF EDUCATION.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

If Charles Dickens, instead of winning applause by exposing the ignorance and brutality of Yorkshire schoolmasters and by denouncing the monstrous neglect of education by the British Government, had directed his shafts of satire against the English religious denominations whose rivalry destroys the little value of the few schools it creates, his powerful book would have been quoted as proof positive that he was no Christian. He would have told what was undoubtedly true: that he would have exposed what was undeniably true: a truth which the English press and Parliament, and indeed all but the English pulpit, are now conceding. There is no doubt that the antagonism—there is no plainer or truer word to describe this religious conflict—between the denominations whose rivalry destroys the little value of the few schools it creates, his powerful book would have been quoted as proof positive that he was no Christian. 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